

Tsung-Yi Lin and Standley, C. C. *The Scope of Epidemiology in Psychiatry*. Geneva, 1962. World Health Organisation (Public Health Papers No. 16). Pp. 76. Price 5s.

AN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL APPROACH to psychiatric research has been adopted by a large number of investigators in recent years. Despite formidable problems of method and techniques, a certain amount of ground has been gained, though a great deal of quite basic work remains to be done. The field is now very extensive and the boundary between this and other lines of inquiry such as clinical research is nebulous and arbitrary.

The headquarters Mental Health Unit of W.H.O. under Dr. Krapf's direction is to be congratulated on having sponsored the production of two excellent short books which, taken together, provide a clear and succinct overview of the subject. The first, by Professor D. D. Reid,* is concerned particularly with methodological issues seen from the standpoint of a general epidemiologist. The second book, now under review, handles the subject more from a psychiatric angle.

The present work has three main sections. The first deals with the estimation of prevalence and incidence of mental disorders at various "levels"—hospital statistics; private psychiatric and general practice; special field surveys. The problem of defining a psychiatric case for survey purposes is mentioned and attention is drawn to the frustrating lack of uniformity in classification of mental disorders and also of demographic data. The second section, devoted to population morbidity surveys, provides in small compass a comprehensive account of the various types of inquiry illustrated by judiciously selected concrete examples. This section, as indeed the whole work, has a vein of constructive and expert criticism running through it which draws together what would otherwise be a rather miscellaneous and disjointed collection of material.

The third section takes up the question of aetiology and evolution of mental disorder as studied by the epidemiological method. Genetic, somatic (prenatal and paranatal) and psycho-

social factors are considered and, again, many illustrative inquiries are quoted. The rôle of this method in the systematic evaluation of various forms of treatment is examined.

This book, together with its companion volume mentioned above, provides a valuable introduction to the subject for the uninitiated, and a salutary perspective for the expert.

K. RAWNSLEY

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

Wilson, Harriet. *Delinquency and Child Neglect*. London, 1962. Allen and Unwin. Pp. 197. Price 25s.

THIS BOOK is written by a sociologist who investigated fifty-two families referred by social agencies to the Co-ordination Committee of a western town, which she calls "Seaport," during a three-year period (1952-5). These were selected from a larger group of 110 families which were still intact and living in the area at the time of the follow-up. The grounds of selection are specified in the form of eleven items broadly indicative of poverty, debt and neglect. Mrs. Wilson's general term for the constellation is "performance inadequacy."

Mrs. Wilson's inquiry is complementary to the Problem Families Study of the Eugenics Society reported by Dr. Blacker in 1952.* Whereas the latter was concerned with problems of ascertainment, and did much to promote the present system of notification and co-ordinated action by local authorities, Mrs. Wilson's aimed at studying the extent and nature of delinquency in the children of problem families.

Mrs. Wilson found that the delinquency for boys (calculated mainly from the frequency of indictable offences) was eight times as high in the children of these families as the general rate for boys in Seaport, estimated by Grünhut in 1956; it was twice the prevailing rate of two delinquency-prone areas in Seaport. A high rate of delinquency was found in the problem families who were living in relative isolation in low-delinquency areas. Recidivism was also higher in the delinquents of this group than in the other delinquents in Seaport.

* D. D. Reid, 1960. *Epidemiological Methods in the Study of Mental Disorder*. Geneva (World Health Organisation: Public Health Papers No. 2).

* Blacker, C. P. (Editor) *Problem Families: Five Inquiries*. The Eugenics Society. Price 5s. See THE EUGENICS REVIEW, 44, 190.